2: Barrett E-5 (no date) 1917 NT20 Washo NT20



136 chiefly by the rabbit and various other small mammals; that of
174 the Sierra region by larger mammals, such as the mountain sheep, deer, and bear.

[133] Even in the arid section of this area there were fairly large streams fed by the melting snows of the high Sierra, and fish of various kinds were abundant. In fact fishing was a highly important vocation, even of the Paiute living over in the region still farther to the east, especially about Pyramid, Winnamucca, and Walker lakes. In the higher mountain section of the Washo country, notably at Lake Tahoe, fishing was, perhaps, the most important phase of this culture. The heavy snows made these higher altitudes undesirable for winter residence, but the Indians spent much time there during the summer months, attracted especially by the abundance of lake trout.

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101 Of the two environments of the Washo, that of the arid Great
174 Basin rather predominated, which fact, combined with the facility
177 of communication and the consequently more frequent association of the Washo with their eastern neighbors than with those to the west, produced a culture in which Great Basin features are somewhat in the ascendancy. However, there are many features of the Washo culture which are very similar to those of the Miwok and Maidu of the California area.

[171]

## SOCIAL ORGANIZATION.

177 Since the coming of the whiteman and the consequent dis-
182 possession of the Indians, the social system of the Washo has been largely disrupted. The following outline of their social organization, therefore, depicts the aboriginal condition of the Washo, though at the present time no villages in the old sense remain, and chieftainship is largely nominal.

621 The social organization of the Washo is primarily based upon
[594] the family unit. The village community is the largest division and each village is entirely distinct from all the others. Apparently there is no approach to a tribal organization, though this exists among the tribes immediately to the east.

[619]

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION: THE WASHO INDIANS

### Habitat

At the time of their initial contacts with Whites in the middle 1800's the Washo Indians were located at Lake Tahoe and a surrounding territory in what is now California and Nevada (Nevins 1956; Sieber 1951). Varying degrees of tribal ownership of land, depending on intensity and exclusiveness of use, existed aboriginally. Washo shared residence of Antelope Valley with Northern Paiute families, were closely associated with Miwok and Maidu on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada, and with the Maidu and Northern Paiute in the Honey Lake area. These "peripheral lands" of Washo territory were not considered exclusively Washo, while the "nuclear lands" were vigorously defended by them as such.

The "peripheral lands" include the widest extensions of common travel in subsistence and trading pursuits. The "nuclear lands" include the common winter residence sites and the surrounding highlands.[1] These territorial lines are the result of a synthesis of territorial descriptions by Royce (1896-7), Barrett (1917), Siskin (1938), Stewart (1941), Indian Claims Commission (1959), d'Azevedo (n.d.), and data collected by the present writer. Families undoubtedly traveled and resided beyond these areas on occasion, but their recognized was essentially within their own of the three territorial divisions of Washo territory shown by the map accompanying this text.

The gathering of food and raw materials for manufactures took the Washo on treks into areas claimed by other tribes. They went south to Antelope Valley for salt (ungabi)[2], farther south to Mono Lake for fly larvae (mats¢bab¢shi), down the Carson River to the area of Dayton for red ochre (sawasang) and on farther for fish (atabi), and they traveled down several of the large canyons 20 to 30 miles west of the crest of the Sierra Nevada for acorns (malung) and other plants. These were treks out of the Washo nuclear lands into areas where contacts with other tribes might be frequent and dangerous.

Washo territory was roughly divided into three areas by which the local groups were distinguished. These were called "northerners" (w¢lm¢lti), "easterners" (pauwalu), and "southerners" (tang¢l¢ltl) (Merriam 1904, 38; Lowie 1939, 301; and Freed 1954). There was no consistent wintering in the west so that there was no distinct group of "westerners" (tang¢l¢ltl).

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1. See map Plate I.
2. The values of the orthographic symbols employed here are presented in Appendix A.

Inheritance
is essentially lacking, but rights in eagle series and certain pinenut groves did pass on from the father and mother to their children. The Washo had a kind of "moiety" division for games at festivals, but these appear to relate more to residence than kinship.

The major concrete kinship group was the extended family. It occupied a single house (galis dangal) and was composed of one, sometimes two, nuclear families who were consanguinally related. A few more distant relatives or even non-relatives were often attached.

The household, in addition to being the primary kinship group, was also the basic economic and political group. It was in theory and practice an autonomous, sovereign unit of society. Beyond the household, in the wider groupings of social organization, the divisions are not clearly defined. For present purposes we can say that the levels of social organization were (1) the household (called here galis dangal after the name of the winter house), (2) the community (angale atega, "houses together"), (3) the band, and (4) the tribal territorial divisions (wɬimɬlti, pauwalu, and hangalɬlti).

There was no generic term for bands, and these, as all actual groups of people, were referred to by the name of their geographical location or the personal names of band members. The "band" is defined here as several cooperating communities from the same sector of Washo territory which came together for antelope and rabbit drives, puberty ceremonies, and other social occasions. The Washo living in the vicinity of the town of Woodfords today thus constitute a band. They comprise a collection of four communities scattered around Woodfords with close ties with the few Washo who live in neighboring Markleeville and Paynesville. Band lines were weak and existed more by the facts of economic cooperation and general social relations than by kinship or political leadership.

Washo bands had a less "corporate" character than those described by Steward (1938) for the aboriginal Owens Valley Paiute and certain Great Basin bands that developed after the introduction of the horse. The corporate character of the Owens Valley Paiute bands is seen in band ownership and defense of hunting and seed territories, a band chief, and band cooperation in a communal sweat house and communal irrigation.

It appears that an older man (often complemented by his wife) who was economically active would attract a following of several related, and perhaps some unrelated, households to form a community around a spring or along a stream. There was no structural position for headman (dɬtumo) beyond the

1. These two cases may be simply extensions of levirate privileges since the second marriages were to younger brothers. In one case the older brother was crippled.

[P.350, B]

# I. THE WASHO INDIANS

passing just west of Virginia City; then north to a point a few miles east of Reno, and from there northwest to Honey Lake. The western boundary followed the crest of the Sierra Nevada. Lake Tahoe and the eastern half of Sierra Valley were in Washo territory, as were the modern towns of Woodfords, Truckee, and Loyalton, California; and Reno, Carson City, Minden, and Gardnerville, Nevada (Barrett, 1917, pp. 5-7; Curtis, 1926, pp. 87, 89; Kroeber, 1925, pp. 569-570; Lowie, 1939, p. 301; Merriam, MS; Siskin, 1938, pp. 626-627; Stewart, 1944, p. 66).

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## POPULATION

Estimates of the aboriginal population vary considerably. Kroeber (1925, p. 570) gives the total in pre-white times at possibly 1,500. Mooney estimates 1,000 Washo in 1845, the date he considers to mark the end of the aboriginal period. Mooney believes that the Washo population had fallen to 300 by 1907 (1928, p. 20). This last figure differs markedly from Curtis' estimate of 800 Washo only three years later in 1910 (1926, p. 91). The Washo tribal secretary, Ronald James, estimates the present-day Washo at 850. Many of them have moved to the cities; probably no more than 600 remain within the boundaries of what was formerly Washo territory.

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## GEOGRAPHICAL DIVISIONS

There are three geographically distinct groups of Washo. Those living north of Carson City, Nevada, are called wélmelti·ʔ. Washo living in the Carson Valley are called pá·waʔluʔ, and the California Washo are called háqalelti·ʔ, with the present California-Nevada border being the approximate dividing line between these last two groups (Simpson, 1876, pp. 93-94; Curtis, 1926, p. 90). I know of no cultural differences between these two groups, but the wélmelti·ʔ are said to differ from the other two by their slow manner of speech. In the spring and summer, when the Washo moved up to Lake Tahoe, the wélmelti·ʔ camped mainly around the northern half of the lake from McKinney around to Glenbrook. The pá·waʔluʔ lived on the western side of the lake south of McKinney, and the southern and eastern lake shore was mixed háqalelti·ʔ and pá·waʔluʔ. However, any family was free to camp anywhere around the lake.

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## SEASONAL MIGRATIONS

The Washo were migratory hunters, fishers, and gatherers. A family usually spent the winter in the Pine Nut Mountains. In the spring, the able-bodied men and women went to Lake Tahoe to fish. The rest of the family moved into the great valleys east of the Sierra Nevada where they searched for roots, grass seeds, birds, birds' eggs, and berries. From time to time, someone who had gone to the lake would carry

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9: d'Azevedo et al. E-4,5 (1952-1961) 1963 NT20 Washo NT20

Northern Paiute NR13

Thus the area in which the Washo lived was somewhat more varied than the territories of other groups, encompassing four life zones. This contrasted to the condition of the Paiute as a whole, where some bands existed in relative luxury for gatherers, and others occupied extremely inhospitable areas. The Washo, as a whole, enjoyed a fairly favorable area for hunting and gathering. In aboriginal times there seems to have been little effort to drive other groups out of the area when they entered it to hunt or gather, suggesting that the Washo felt they were amid plenty and that added exploitation would not deprive them. This does not hold for their view of the pinenut areas they utilized. They defended these with vigor, as they also defended fishing sites. There appears to have been a sufficient supply of nuts to permit very large gatherings in the fall at the beginning of the harvest season.

As with the Paiute, the Washo family appears to have been the primary unit of social organization. Families combined into bands that may or may not have had more permanence of membership than did those of the Paiute. Informants insist that families decided the course of their yearly movement independent of any band activities, either joining other bands or going on hunting and gathering treks -- often as far as the Pacific coast -- by themselves.

Band leaders had little, if any, more authority than did their counterparts among the Paiute. When bands gathered for antelope or rabbit hunting a shaman or rabbit boss took charge of the actual hunting operation as was true elsewhere in the Basin. Mountain sheep and mule deer were hunted in small informal groups, the latter occasionally in communal hunts.

The Washo recognized different areas within their territory but to what degree people or bands remained within these territories is not known. Lowie (1939, 301-52) sees incipient moiety formation in this division, but its only expression appears to have been the selection of members of teams to play games during the annual pinenut festival. Certain groups living in the mountains near what is today Woodfords were viewed by other Washo as "crazy," i.e., particularly brave, unpredictable and fierce. This was because, according to informants, these people had a great deal of association with California tribes (Downs, 1961b). The Woodfords group appears to have served traditionally as Washo "shock troops," being called upon for help whenever it was necessary to fight neighboring Indians. Freed (1960, 353) reports that a leader could assemble fighting men by sending a knotted deerhide string to his supporters. My own informants corroborated this but made it clear that no one was compelled to respond. There is no record of interband hostility even to the degree mentioned above for the Paiute.